

REPORT
OF THE
Executive Committee
OF THE
New York
Civil-Service Reform Association

READ AT THE ANNUAL MEETING, MAY 1, 1884

NEW YORK
PUBLISHED FOR THE
CIVIL-SERVICE REFORM ASSOCIATION
BY
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
1884

The Civil-Service Reform Association.

Publications and Documents now ready (May, 1884).

PUBLICATIONS.

- II. **The Beginning of the Spoils System in the National Government, 1829-30.** (Reprinted, by permission, from Parton's "Life of Andrew Jackson.") Per copy, 5 cts. Per 100 \$3 00
- III. **The Spoils System and Civil-Service Reform in the Custom-House and Post-Office at New York.** By DORMAN B. EATON. 136 pages, 8vo. Per copy, 25 cts. Per 100 \$10 00
- IV. **Civil-Service Reform in the New York Custom-House.** By WILLARD BROWN. Per copy, 5 cts. Per 100 \$3 00
- V. **Term and Tenure of Office.** By DORMAN B. EATON. Second edition, abridged. Per copy, 15 cts. Per 100 \$10 00
- VII. **The Danger of an Office-Holding Aristocracy.** By E. L. GODKIN. Per copy, 5 cts. Per 100 \$3 00

DOCUMENTS.

- The Operation of the Civil-Service Rules in the N. Y. Custom-House:** Report, made to the Senate, in March, 1881, by the Secretary of the Treasury. Per copy, 5 cts. Per 100 \$2 25
- Civil-Service Reform:** a condensed statement for general distribution. Per 1,000 \$3 00
- What the Competitive Examinations Really Are.** Per copy, 4 cts. Per 100 \$3 75
- Daniel Webster and the Spoils System.** An extract from Senator Bayard's oration at Dartmouth College, June, 1882. Per copy, 3 cts. Per 100 \$1 50
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- Report on the Expediency of Asking Candidates for Public Office their Views on Civil-Service Reform.** Per copy, 10 cts. Per 100 \$7 50
- Proceedings at the Annual Meeting of the National Civil-Service Reform League, 1882,** with address by George William Curtis. Per copy, 10 cts. Per 100 \$7 50
- Proceedings at the Annual Meeting of the National Civil-Service Reform League, 1883,** with address by George William Curtis. Per copy, 10 cts. Per 100 \$7 50
- Address to the Voters of the United States.** Per copy, 1 ct. Per 100 \$0 75

Other publications will follow.

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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS, PUBLISHERS FOR THE ASSOCIATION,
27 and 29 West Twenty-Third Street, New York.

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REPORT
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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE
NEW YORK
CIVIL-SERVICE REFORM ASSOCIATION,

READ AT THE ANNUAL MEETING, MAY 1, 1884.

THE members of your Committee are again enabled to report unexpected and most satisfactory progress during the past year. That substantial success came to the Association so early, and has been so continuous, is ground for the heartiest congratulation and encouragement. Our work is very far from being completed, but it has commended itself to the intelligent and independent sentiment of the country, and we may now feel assured that we shall overcome any obstacles we may meet with hereafter. Great questions are looming up before us, but party lines are not yet so drawn as to define them; and we have every reason to believe that this will continue to be the situation until administrative reform shall have won the day in its contest with the spoils system.

Strong testimony to the actual strength of the reform movement and the real progress which it has made is to be found in the fact that politicians of the spoils school, who for a time appeared to feel that the movement was one which might be allowed to have its way, because sure to fail, now realize that it is rapidly undermining their power, and are seeking earnestly to cripple it by indirect if not by direct means.

In all the legislative work that the Committee has done, we have received essential aid from those members of both parties who appreciated the importance of withdrawing the subordinate offices of government from the field of partisan

activity, and who realized that the true object of political parties is to carry into effect the principles maintained by them, and not to gain the emoluments of office. On the other hand, we have had to encounter the opposition of those in both parties to whom politics is a gainful trade, and whose political importance is derived chiefly from their skill in the use of patronage to forward the fortunes of a party or a faction. We must expect that this opposition will continue. But so far as the Federal Government and that of the State of New York are concerned, both parties have agreed (to use the language of Clarkson N. Potter), in advance of the approaching strife, that in future differences neither will exercise the objectionable power of treating the public service as spoils of war. This agreement is embodied in legislation which is binding on every citizen, and which neither party could attempt to repeal without a decisive protest from the country.

At the annual meeting of the Association on the 3d of May, 1883, the Constitution of this Association was amended, by adding to the 9th Article the following: "Life members, exempt from dues, may be elected by the Executive Committee at any regular meeting thereof on payment of \$75."

The following officers for the year 1883-4 were elected at the same meeting:

PRESIDENT.

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

VICE-PRESIDENTS.

BENJ. H. BRISTOW,

JOHN JAY,

HOWARD POTTER,

R. B. MINTURN,

R. D. HITCHCOCK,

GEORGE B. BUTLER,

OSWALD OTTENDORFER,

O. B. POTTER.

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EVERETT P. WHEELER,

THATCHER M. ADAMS,

CHARLES H. MARSHALL,

SILAS W. BURT,

F. K. PENDLETON,

EDWARD CARY,
CHARLES COLLINS,
CHARLES S. FAIRCHILD,
GEO. WALTON GREEN,
ELIAL F. HALL,

GEO. HAVEN PUTNAM,
WM. CARY SANGER,
HENRY Y. SATTERLEE,
WM. H. THOMSON,
F. W. WHITRIDGE.

At a meeting of the Executive Committee, held immediately after the adjournment of the annual meeting, Everett P. Wheeler was re-elected Chairman, William Potts was re-elected Secretary, and John C. Eno was re-elected Treasurer, and the Standing Committees were re-constituted as follows:

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE.

E. L. GODKIN, CHAIRMAN,

GEORGE WM. CURTIS,
HERBERT H. DRAKE,

A. R. MACDONOUGH,
HORACE WHITE.

COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATION.

CARL SCHURZ, CHAIRMAN,

THEODORE ROOSEVELT,
FRANCIS LYNDE STETSON,

EVERETT P. WHEELER,
FRED. W. WHITRIDGE.

AUDITING COMMITTEE.

CHARLES COLLINS,

ELIAL F. HALL.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

IRA BURSLEY, CHAIRMAN,

JOHN C. ENO,
D. WILLIS JAMES,

J. HAMPDEN ROBB,
FRED. W. STEVENS.

COMMITTEE ON AFFILIATED SOCIETIES.

WILLARD BROWN,

E. B. MERRILL.

No Assistant Secretary was elected at this time. Subsequently, on the 23d of October, 1883, Mr. Alexander Fullerton, who had served the Association effectively in its office for nearly a year, without compensation, was elected to that position.

Mr. F. W. Stevens declined the membership on the Finance Committee to which he had been elected, and sub-

sequently Col. Silas W. Burt, Mr. Charles S. Fairchild, and Mr. Thatcher M. Adams resigned their membership in the Executive Committee, and Mr. A. R. Macdonough resigned his membership in the Publication Committee, as hereinafter stated.

At the meeting of the Executive Committee held on the 6th of June, the By-Laws were so amended as to provide for a Committee on Affiliated Societies of five members, instead of two, as heretofore, and Messrs. George William Curtis, Everett P. Wheeler, and J. Hampden Robb were added to that Committee.

At the meeting of the Executive Committee held on the 2d of April, 1884, the By-Laws were further amended so as to provide for a Standing Committee upon Examinations, consisting of five members. No appointments have yet been made upon this Committee.

At the meeting upon the 6th of June, notice was given of the formation of a local Association at Troy, N. Y. This Association, however, appears to have never really taken root, and of the Associations in New York State which had been previously formed, those in Schenectady, Plattsburgh, Ogdensburgh, Auburn, Poughkeepsie, Jamestown, and Attica are reported not to have an active existence, there being no local work directly in this line of sufficient importance to require them to maintain their organization. Of the remaining local Associations in this State, several have done very effective service. This is especially true of those in Brooklyn, Buffalo, Rochester, Watertown, Newburgh, and Elmira.

Immediately after the last annual meeting of the Association, and early enough for the fact to be noted in the last Annual Report, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed the State Civil-Service Law prepared by us, after its amendment by the addition of the principal sections of the "Miller Bill," providing for an examination of the existing system of appointment and compensation of executive officers. The Commission appointed by the Governor under this Act, as stated in the last Report, consisted of Messrs. Andrew D. White, Augustus Schoonmaker, and

Henry A. Richmond. Mr. White finding it impossible to serve, the Hon. John Jay was appointed in his stead, and was chosen Chairman of the Board, which subsequently appointed Colonel Burt as Chief Examiner, thus securing the assistance of the officer most competent to supervise the inauguration of the new system. Col. Burt thought it fitting to resign his membership in this Committee, while continuing to aid it with his counsel.

By its terms this law took effect as regards State appointments upon the 4th of January last, though a vast deal of preliminary work had to be performed at an earlier date, such as making a roster of the executive force of the State, and thoroughly classifying the same. In all the work which the Commission has performed it has had the steadfast and hearty support of the Governor, and its progress in the application of business methods to the appointments within its scope has been unchecked.

The First Annual Report of the Commission, transmitted to the Legislature in January, which can be furnished by this Association, will be found exceedingly valuable.

The Eighth Section of the State law as passed authorized the Mayor of each city in the State having a population of 50,000 or upwards, to establish a similar system as regards municipal appointments. This provision affects the cities of New York, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Albany, Troy, Rochester, and Syracuse.

A committee was appointed to wait upon Mayor Edson, and request him to exercise the authority given in this section. The Mayor viewed the request favorably, and subsequently issued rules regarding appointments, to take effect upon the first of January, 1884, being in this preceded but a short time by Mayor Low of Brooklyn, and followed but a little later by Mayor Scoville of Buffalo.

Of the examiners appointed under Mayor Edson's rules, Messrs. Fairchild and Macdonough were members of our Executive Committee and Committee on Publications respectively, and they have felt constrained to present their resignations. It is not expected, however, that we shall be thereby wholly deprived of their assistance in our deliberations.

Peculiarities in the character of the form of government of New York City led to the exclusion from the operation of the reform bill of certain departments in which reform methods are peculiarly needed. To include these, and to make action by the Mayors of the several cities affected thereby imperative instead of simply permissive, this Committee drafted a bill in amendment of Section 8 of the Civil-Service bill, and placed the same in charge of the Hon. George Clinton in the Assembly, and of the Hon. John I. Gilbert in the Senate. In the Assembly, the bill was reported favorably by the Committee on Cities to which it had been referred. A delegation visited Albany upon behalf of the Association, and after debate and some amendment, the bill was passed. As aiding in this result, credit should be given to General N. M. Curtis, on whose motion the scope of the bill was so extended as to include all cities in the State of 20,000 inhabitants and upwards, and he also gave much assistance in its general advocacy. In the Senate the bill was disastrously amended in Committee of the Whole by the exclusion of the Police and Fire Departments, and by attaching to it an amendment, proposed by Mr. Lansing, relieving honorably discharged soldiers and sailors of the late war from any examination under the Civil-Service Commission. It is still pending, however, and we hope will yet pass without serious injury to the efficiency of its provisions.

The Legislature at its last session passed a bill prohibiting political assessments upon office-holders, and still more stringent provisions of a similar character were embodied in the tenth section of the law establishing the Commission. In one respect this latter section went further than is approved by the majority of this Committee, because by making punishable under the law the receipt by any person in the State of any contribution for a political purpose from any state, city, county, town, or village official, it probably prevents such contributions as might be absolutely voluntary. As the desire of the Association was to prevent the collection of money or other valuable thing from office-holders, which could not in like manner be collected from

those not holding public office, and not to interfere with the free use, by any citizen, of his own means, the Committee thought it best to draft a modification of the section, which, together with other matters desired by the State Commission to facilitate its work, is embodied in a bill now pending in the Assembly under the charge of Mr. Husted.

While the Committee felt that it was desirable that this modification of the anti-assessment clause of the bill should be made, its members do not conceal from themselves the fact that the bill may be thereby made more difficult of enforcement, and they therefore call for closer supervision of the action thereunder on the part of those interested in the cause, and for the strict application of its principles.

During the political campaign of last autumn, it was universally acknowledged that much less money was drawn for campaign purposes from those holding clerical positions under the Government than in previous years. That assessments were made, however, is known to be a fact, and this fact has by a special committee of the Association been called to the attention of the present District Attorney of New York, Mr. Peter B. Olney, formerly a member of this Committee, and we are now awaiting his action thereon.

It may be noted in passing, that early in the session a bill was introduced into the Legislature by Mr. Hooley asking for the repeal of the Civil-Service law, but it has never been supposed that any considerable number of members would support it.

A number of bills providing for important changes in the municipal government of New York, introduced in the Legislature by the Hon. Theodore Roosevelt, a member of our Committee on Legislation, which have passed both Houses will do very much to purify the administration of the government of this city.

At the time of our last annual meeting, the appointment of a Chief Examiner under the Federal Civil-Service Commission was pending. Shortly after that date, the name of Mr. Keim, who had been strenuously objected to by those interested in the cause, was withdrawn, and that of Mr. Charles Lyman, an able officer and a strong friend of the

system, was substituted. The favor with which this appointment was received was as general as the disapproval which met that which preceded it.

The Federal law went into effect upon the 16th of July last. Its immediate influence was limited to the departments at Washington, and to such Custom-Houses and Post-Offices as had so many as fifty clerks. This provision brought within its purview, besides the departments at the seat of government, the following local offices, viz.: Custom-Houses—New York City, N. Y.; Boston, Mass.; Philadelphia, Pa.; San Francisco, Cal.; Baltimore, Md.; New Orleans, La.; Chicago, Ill.; Burlington, Vt.; Portland, Me.; Detroit, Mich.; Port Huron, Mich. Post-Offices—Albany, N. Y.; Baltimore, Md.; Boston, Mass.; Brooklyn, N. Y.; Buffalo, N. Y.; Chicago, Ill.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Cleveland, Ohio; Detroit, Mich.; Indianapolis, Ind.; Kansas City, Mo.; Louisville, Ky.; Milwaukee, Wis.; Newark, N. J.; New Orleans, La.; New York City, N. Y.; Philadelphia, Pa.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; Providence, R. I.; Rochester, N. Y.; St. Louis, Mo.; San Francisco, Cal.; Washington, D. C.

"At these various offices Boards of Examiners have since been appointed, and the machinery for the selection of clerical employees and others of a like character has been set in motion. This machinery forms the liveliest possible contrast to what is popularly known as the 'machine'; the latter being an organization for effecting political or personal objects by the manipulation of the public offices and official funds, the former an impersonal method of selecting from among candidates those most likely to be suited for the positions to be filled, by applying a test having some definite relation to the official service to be performed.

"That much difficulty would be found in initiating so radical a change in so large a number of offices was to be expected; that so little friction has occurred is, under the circumstances, surprising. In much the larger number of the offices affected, Boards of Examiners had to be selected from among those having no experience in the kind of duties to be performed, in some instances from among those having no special knowledge of or interest in the system;

and, in a larger number of cases, those who were employed as examiners could not but feel that their superior officers looked upon the whole movement with any thing but a favorable eye. The results at the various points have been unequal in their character, and in some instances they have been such as properly to awaken adverse criticism, although in no case has such just criticism properly applied to the system itself, but simply to its administration. It is claimed, and possibly with justice, that in some instances the standard of requirement has been placed too low, and has admitted to the eligible list such as were not qualified. If this is so, it has undoubtedly been done from a well-meant but wholly mistaken desire to offset a popular prejudice that the new system operated to the benefit of the college-bred man at the expense of him who had only the training of the public schools, a theory utterly unsupported by the facts of experience."

Two bills for the repeal of the reform law have been submitted in the House of Representatives and referred to the Committee on the Civil Service, which has reported against them.

The Federal Commission has prepared and submitted to the President a report covering the history of its labors for the past year, which report can be furnished by this Association and will be read with interest.

Until the new system shall have been so far established in the larger offices as to run smoothly there, it has not been thought wise that the President should exercise the power given him under the law to complicate the labors of the Commission by extending it to many minor offices. The Commission has, however, been requested by the Committee to ask the President to include the Mint Service, which is limited in extent, special in character, and at present peculiarly in danger of abuse.

At the annual meeting of the National Civil-Service Reform League, which was held at Newport, Rhode Island, on the first of August, at which this Association was well represented, the matter of the repeal of the so-called Four-years laws, limiting the term of many important Federal officers,

such as collectors, postmasters, etc., which had been previously proposed by us, was emphasized as the next important step in our movement.

Subsequently a bill to effect this object was prepared by our Committee on Legislation, and entrusted to the Hon. Joseph R. Hawley for presentation in the Senate, and to the Hon. Albert S. Willis for presentation in the House. A form of petition asking for the repeal was also prepared and widely circulated, and about twelve thousand signatures were obtained to the same. These petitions have been duly presented, and committees from the League and from this and other Associations have had satisfactory hearings before the Civil-Service Committees of both Houses. The Committee of the House of Representatives subsequently made a unanimous report in favor of the bill, and, on the 21st of April, asked for a suspension of the rules in order that it might be passed, but failed to secure the same. This, however, did not defeat the bill, and it may yet be passed later in the session.

It is noteworthy that a bill introduced into the United States House of Representatives similar to the Lansing amendment to the State bill, exempting from examination honorably discharged soldiers and sailors, was unanimously reported against by the Committee to which it was referred.

"The record of proposed legislation during the year would not be made complete without noting that bills are now pending in the Legislatures of the States of Massachusetts and Maryland; the former looking to a thorough organization of both the State and the Municipal service under a State Commission, and the latter to the organization of the municipal service of Baltimore, also under a State Commission.

"And as a more striking indication that the movement in which we are engaged is not merely local but general, the Secretary would add that in June last, in response to a request received from a member of the Parliament of the Province of Victoria, at Melbourne, he forwarded to him certain documents relating to the work accomplished here, and that, about the first of February, he received a commu-

nication from the same gentleman, accompanying bills passed on the first of November, providing for the thorough reorganization of the Civil Service of the Province of Victoria."

During the campaign of last autumn, as in that of the previous year, letters were addressed to candidates for the Legislature, for the purpose of eliciting their views regarding the Civil-Service Reform movement. Many replies were received and subsequently published in pamphlet form, and, as before, undoubtedly with a beneficial effect. Beyond the printing of these letters and replies, and the reprinting from the appendix to the Report of the State Commission of letters from Collector Robertson and Postmaster Pearson, the Committee has confined itself, in the distribution of documents and pamphlets, to those previously published, to those published by the League, and to brief circulars and addresses, of which many have been issued. The movement of the more important documents has been as follows:

	On hand May 1, 1883.	Printed or bought since May 1, 1883.	Distributed.	Remaining on hand May 1, 1884.
Pamphlet No. 1—Purposes	1413		1313	100
" " 2—The Spoils System	2142		467	1675
" " 3—Eaton's Report	391		8	383
" " 4—C. S.-R. N. Y. Custom-House	1273		782	491
" " 5—Term and Tenure of Office	167		60	107
" " 5— " " " " " abridg'd	1699		1124	575
" " 7—Danger of an Office-holding Aristocracy	260	1000	600	660
Report of Ex. Com., May, 1882	39		39	
" " " " May, 1883		3500	2650	850
Daniel Webster on the Spoils System	1606		106	1500
Pendleton and Dawes Bills Compared	750		175	575
What the Examinations Really Are	556	1020	1126	450
Letters to and Replies from Candidates, 1882	105		15	90
" " " " " " 1883		1000	550	450
C.-S. Reform—a brief tract	1412		512	900
Secretary Sherman's Report	1800		200	1600
How you may Aid Civil-Service Reform	1000	4000	4946	54
What Remains to be Done		20000	19750	250
Four-Years Term ; or, Rotation in Office		2000	2000	
Pearson and Robertson Letters		6000	2800	3200

The Treasurer's statement, presented herewith, again shows a considerable amount of money received and expended, and a good balance remaining on hand. We have to thank our friends heartily for their generosity, to call their attention to the very large amount of work accomplished in proportion to the expense incurred, and to ask them still to continue their favors of this kind as well as the moral support which is of so much importance to the work.

A considerable change has been taking place in the membership of the Association, caused in part by the decision of the Committee to drop from the roll the names of a large number who cannot now be found or who are long in arrears for dues. This has, however, been in great part offset by a large accession of new paying members, so that at this date the total membership does not vary very greatly from that of a year ago.

Respectfully submitted,

EVERETT P. WHEELER,

Chairman.

WILLIAM POTTS,

Secretary.

CIVIL-SERVICE REFORM.

The management of the Executive Departments of the Federal, State, and Municipal Governments is a matter of business and not of politics. Certain practical work must be performed, most of which is of a routine character. This work requires a large force of subordinate officials. The work must be done under the supervision of Department Heads, in a method prescribed by law, and the political opinions of those doing the work are not in any way involved. The people simply want competent, industrious, honest, and intelligent officials, inspired with self-respect and calling no man master, but owing allegiance only to the Government which employs them. Officials having such qualifications of necessity become more valuable in proportion as their experience increases.

The advocates of Civil-Service Reform are in favor of the establishment by law of such a system of appointment and promotion for all subordinate officials as may secure the class above referred to, and the retention of such officials as long as they continue faithful, capable, and efficient. They know of no way in which personal favor can be excluded and proper material most surely obtained at the outset, except by competitive examinations, open to all comers, irrespective of political creed, the examinations to be of such a character as to test qualifications for the special service required, and to be followed by appointment upon probation for the purpose of showing the special fitness of the person selected. Such an examination should be of a scholastic character only so far as may be necessary to show that the candidate has sufficient education to discharge the duties of the position intelligently, but must be in the main practical and technical, according to the position to be filled.

They therefore urge this system of appointment, with promotion according to merit, and continuance in the service during competency and good behavior. They also demand the prohibition by law of all political assessments upon office-holders.

In furtherance of this work, both generally and with a special view to the State service and municipal departments, they ask the assistance of all good citizens, and urge those who are like-minded and willing to connect themselves with the Association to signify their desire by addressing

WILLIAM POTTS, *Secretary*,

NO. 4 PINE STREET, NEW YORK.

The yearly dues are \$2.00, which should be enclosed with application for membership.

PRESIDENT.

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

VICE-PRESIDENTS.

BENJ. H. BRISTOW,
CHAS. S. FAIRCHILD,
ROSWELL D. HITCHCOCK,
JOHN JAY,

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OSWALD OTTENDORFER,
HOWARD POTTER,
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SECRETARY.

WILLIAM POTTS.

TREASURER.

JOHN C. ENO.

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E. L. GODKIN,
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H. B. B. STAPLER.